

OXFORD

MAGAZINE

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In last week's *Blueprint Bulletin*, now renamed *University Bulletin*, the Vice-Chancellor opened her update on internal communication with a quotation from Bernard Shaw. We are tempted to quote another Irish author: "Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery..." (Oscar Wilde). Wellington Square appears, to all intents and purposes, to have copied the policy recently announced in *Oxford Magazine*. Now Wellington Square invites "letters" from staff, duplicating the scheme for the submission of readers' questions already announced by the *Magazine*—in both cases the aim is that staff can get authoritative and informative answers to matters of concern in this time of great uncertainty. That much the two schemes have in common. A case of great minds thinking alike? The more, the merrier you might say.

However the situation is not that simple. When we first approached Wellington Square four weeks ago to explain our proposed scheme in the hope that they would support the move and undertake to cooperate as fully as possible, we were told simply to direct our questions to the news office in PAD, as if we were an enquirer

external to the University—implying that we would be treated as such. The Vice-Chancellor's scheme not only offers a different access point (the "internal communications" web address) but promises that "Responses to the letters by the relevant member of the senior team will be published each week". Could it possibly be that "letters" will be answered more expeditiously than questions from the *Magazine* and that our questions will be answered by PAD rather than directly by the most relevant and responsible senior University officers? Time will tell.

Meanwhile we note with interest possible shifts in policy in last week's *Bulletin*. Unlike recent blogs from senior officers, the Vice-Chancellor's announcements were not hidden behind a SSO wall. Might it be that it is at last being realised that the use of SSO to 'protect' certain information has not only appeared arbitrary but has often made little sense to web users, other than as a reflexion of an overly defensive, obstructivist and secretive official attitude. Who decides which information requires SSO and why? Is it not in the public interest in general that openness is the default position? One does wonder why

Great minds

Oxford Magazine publication arrangements

We are unable to publish the *Oxford Magazine* in print for the foreseeable future, as a result of COVID19-related working restrictions. Arrangements for archival copies will be made at a later date.

We will continue to publish online editions of the *Oxford Magazine* and send emails to our online subscribers. We will also send emails to our print subscribers, where we have an email address for them, so that they continue to receive the *Magazine* in an available format.

If you are a print subscriber and do not wish to receive such emails, please visit www.staffsubs.ox.ac.uk and cancel your subscription.

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...and much more

it is “news” that, in the Vice-Chancellor’s words, “Working around the clock with colleagues to fashion an effective response [to Covid-19], it is easy to forget that others may not have access to the same information you do....” With due recognition of the pressures on the senior team at present, we would respectfully point out that this is not the first time that the problem of internal communication has come up in the pages of *Oxford Magazine*.

SSO is about to become a matter of increased and immediate concern to all of us. Wellington Square is set to introduce an enhanced SSO authentication system. Experience with IT upgrades in the past suggests that we should be prepared for disruption, if not chaos. Accessing information will be more onerous for everybody, perhaps impossible for some. Particular problems will arise for retired staff and alumni, some of whom already struggle to maintain their SSO status and are often excluded from basic information sources in the University. The need for a smart phone during authentication—it is not made clear whether this is obligatory or whether al-

ternatives will be available—will add further to the inevitable exclusion of certain staff groups. In some faculties and colleges smart phone connections are patchy.

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Meanwhile, we invite readers to submit questions on areas of concern to them, answers to which we hope eventually to receive from appropriate senior University officers. We have already forwarded two questions from members of Congregation to Wellington Square.

Questions and answers will be published in our new Q&A column as soon as possible; answers will be forwarded to questioners themselves as soon as they are received. We remind readers that their names will only be revealed to Wellington Square or published in the Q&A column with their prior agreement, in order to allow greater freedom for staff to raise controversial or sensitive issues with safety.

Please send us your questions.

B.B, T.J.H

Sample Questions

G.R. EVANS

OXFORD’s press office of a decade or two ago was chiefly concerned with managing ‘reputation’ to counter media criticism. It is surely an important requirement of modern life that ‘the University’ should be fully and actively represented in public media by an effective public relations office making outward-facing statements. But it is not at all the same thing to be responsible for internal communication to staff. The University’s communications not only with the world at large but now internally are now managed by an extensive Public Affairs Directorate (PAD).¹ This expansion from a ‘press office’ role in outward-facing defence of the University to responsibility for communication about internal ‘affairs’ was never put to Congregation. Putting this body as the conduit of the University’s conversations with itself was surely no minor development.

It is important to understand PAD’s location in the University’s governance and administrative structure. It occupies a place in Professional Services and University Administration, where the heads of the various ‘Professional Services’ sections report to the Registrar. PAD sits ‘within the External Affairs Portfolio with the Alumni Office, International Strategy Office and the Development Office’ and its Director reports to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for External Affairs with a dotted reporting line to the Vice-Chancellor.² However, this brief does not explicitly include internal communications. This function was once the responsibility of Anne Trefethan, who was appointed to the new post of Chief Information Officer for the University in 2012 and served until 2017. From 2018 Séan Duffy has held the position, now defined as providing ‘leadership for the delivery of IT services for the University to support the global academic status of Oxford’.³ Thus, as far as one can tell, it would appear that while internal communication is managed by an all-purpose PAD,

this part of its remit seems to be directly overseen by the Director of IT Services.

However it came about, internal communications are now comprehensively run by PAD. PAD’s website currently says that the Head of Internal Communications within PAD leads the following ‘activities’: ‘managing cross-University channels’; ‘providing communications advice and planning for issues of University-wide importance’ and also ‘offering advice to individual divisions and departments about communications issues and projects’. PAD also provides ‘templates for communications planning and activity (such as surveys and consultations)’ and works ‘closely with communications staff based in different parts of the University to ensure the sharing of information, resources and best practice’.⁴

Furthermore, PAD supervises ‘communications and engagement with staff’, ‘including all-staff emails, the online Staff Gateway, the internal magazine *Blueprint* and the electronic *Blueprint Bulletin*’. *Blueprint* has an ‘editorial team’, made up of the Internal Communications Manager, the Communications Officer and the Senior Graphic Designer. Even the *Gazette* ‘is produced by the Internal Communications Team, Public Affairs Directorate’,⁵ though it retains its own expert editors. The *Oxford Magazine* remains of course entirely independent.

PAD’s online advice on the drafting of communications to achieve ‘objectives’ suggests that a somewhat manipulative mindset has developed in its making of recommendations. It cannot be for Oxford’s future good health for it to foster a parallel universe within it, in which communication has other purposes than the fundamental academic pursuit of truth. One of the historic strengths of the University has been the openness of its discussions with itself and its fearlessness in the face of press and Parliamentary comment.

The print version of *Blueprint* in its most recent (Hilary Term) issue does not mention Covid-19 and its effects on the University except to feature the vaccine research then beginning. It is a highly professional production visually, upbeat, always positive in the story it has to tell,⁶ but bearing the marks of the ‘public relations’ profession of many of its staff. The print *Blueprint* routinely introduces figures with significant responsibilities as ‘people like us’ to an intended readership of the whole of the University’s staff most directly and primarily, although openly accessible to the outside world. Kate Blackmon was invited to explain why her membership of the Education Committee ‘is important to her’. She was asked, for example, ‘how do you prepare for meetings?’ and ‘how do you juggle your time commitments?’. The desire to be accessible in this way can have a patronising ring, at least to academics.

* * *

Internal communication has taken on a new and much more important role now due to Covid-19. It is all the more important to consider what has changed and how new forms of secure protection of information seem to have intruded. It was encouraging to read the Vice-Chancellor’s ‘blog’ of October 11 on ‘Internal Communications’⁷

In the recent past a number of vehicles for keeping the University informed supplementary to *Blueprint* have been tried, commonly by email circulation to ‘staff’ or ‘students’. Following the Covid-19 emergency the University has been run by the Silver and Bronze groups. Now internal communication has largely taken the form of messages from members of these groups, notably the Vice-Chancellor and various Pro-Vice-Chancellors and occasionally from the Registrar. Primarily these communications have been upbeat and reassuring but not really very informative. However, it is not at all clear why many messages should have been circulated behind SSO. It is hard to see why, and on what principles that form of secrecy has been decided on. The Vice-Chancellor’s open staff Q and A sessions are now being published in transcribed form, but again only behind SSO.⁸

The *Blueprint Bulletin*, now to be renamed the *University Bulletin* has been a striking case in point. An email to the address provided online asking for reasons for this secrecy was smartly ‘returned to sender’ undelivered. The Cambridge Vice-Chancellor’s ‘Updates’ during the Covid-19 emergency, produced on behalf of Cambridge’s counterpart ‘Emergency Management’ groups,⁹ were published on the open, publicly-accessible web as ‘University Statements’.¹⁰ They were recorded in Minutes disclosed in response to an FOI request to have caused some ‘consternation’ but that had to do with their content not the openness of their publication.¹¹

The new *University Bulletin* is to include ‘a wider range of senior staff’ blogs ‘on critical issues of the week’ and ‘a letters section’, to which ‘responses’ by ‘the relevant member of the senior team will be published each week’. The Vice-Chancellor mentions the new *Précis* of the *Gazette* and comments that the *Gazette* and the *Bulletin* ‘have slightly different purposes’ without perhaps really making clear the constitutional role of the *Gazette* in the University’s conduct of its business. It will be important that these changes help to put right some problems with communications in recent months (see *Gazette*, 15 October).

Since March, while the University has been run under the Crisis Management Framework, the circulation of messages about how things were going has provided an alert only to particular classes of recipients through the ‘staff gateway’. Typically these communications have been framed in the most general terms and always seeking to be upbeat. The new Michaelmas Coordination Group,¹² is described there as a ‘high-level working group’, bringing together the University and the Colleges in planning for the future. Its statement about ‘governance arrangements’ is worth quoting in full because it confirms that decision-making is continuing under the powers delegated by Council to the Crisis Management Framework, though Congregation has not been asked to confirm the extent of the delegated powers or their duration.

In its own Q and A the statement describes a closed system:

*‘The MCG is an advisory group that works within the University’s contingency planning framework to deal with the impacts and repercussions of the global coronavirus outbreak. It reports to the University’s Bronze and Silver Groups for strategic-level decisions, and commissions, coordinates or delegates work to the steering and sub-groups that have been formed to cover education, research, finance, planning and personnel issues.’*¹³

PAD has been represented at the discussions of the ‘crisis’ Bronze Group, as its Minutes show. It has advised not only on ‘comms’ but also about their ‘cascading’. ‘Cascading’ is a method of distributing information hierarchically rather than simply publishing it for general reading. The Silver Group Minutes also show that PAD has been busy assisting in the making of decisions about ‘comms’. This presence at such meetings seems to bring PAD into the realms of high-level decision-making. That tallies with a job advertisement for the Director of PAD with a closing date of September 2018 which may still be found online.¹⁴ It sought someone with ‘experience in complex stakeholder management, and skilled at getting to outcomes through collaboration and influencing’. The appointee would ‘work with’ the Vice-Chancellor, ‘helping her to succeed in delivering a more obviously open, inclusive and forward-looking University’.

* * *

In the previous issue of *Oxford Magazine* the editors announced a novel editorial initiative, within which they asked readers to submit questions related to current University affairs, answers to which they would seek on their behalf from the central administration. The potential value of this new channel for internal communication and information-provision is surely timely, given the limited information currently being made available. Authoritative information is all the more necessary in these stressful times when rumour, misinformation and conspiracy theorizing are rife.

This prompts thoughts as to the sorts of questions – and the sorts of areas of concern they might point to – that might be most helpful. Here are some suggestions.

Q.1 On what basis and by what criteria are a number of information sites concerning general policy hidden behind SSO?

The only reason for the *Gazette* to have a redacted ver-

sion is the ‘data protection’ of some personal names in the complete text. Any decision whether or not to hide Oxford information behind SSO should surely be taken against a published set of criteria? When I asked about this in June I was told that ‘within PAD, we decide whether to use SSO based on a range of factors’, not listed. Otherwise the decision as to what to hide from open publication seems to be taken without an explicit set of rules, and where there are no points of confidentiality or data protection surely there should be a presumption in favour of openness?

Q. 2. How and where are the Minutes of the Silver and Bronze Groups to be published, and how soon after their meetings, so as to keep Congregation fully informed about the decision-making involved?

The Vice-Chancellor’s annual oration on 6 October was frank on many matters, but it made no mention of the way governance has been modified since early in the year. The first batch of Minutes of the Silver and Bronze groups which have been acting under the University’s Crisis Management Framework during the pandemic were downloadable from the *Gazette* on 23 July, in response to a Congregation Question. It is promised there that further Minutes will be published monthly, though that has not happened yet.¹⁵

These early accounts are true ‘Minutes’, and drafted as such. They form a clear and detailed plain-speaking record of the way these bodies responded to the Covid-19 crisis on the University’s behalf. They show how difficulties were recognised, thought through and addressed. They demonstrate that a realistic attempt was made to get priorities right for the University in testing times. The publication of later Minutes will be of considerable importance to keeping Congregation informed on University governance as now being practised. Equally, the historical record will be important when the time eventually comes to review and learn from decision made in response to Covid-19.

Q.3 On what principles and against what expectations is Council determining the balance to be struck in the interest of transparency in the information provided and instructing PAD accordingly?

The Vice-Chancellor had stirring things to say about freedom of speech in her Oration. The University is au-

tonomous and may make its own decisions about what it publishes about its decision-making, but it should do so against national expectations of transparency and according to national interest. A principle respected under s.36 of the Freedom of Information Act is that disclosure may be withheld if it would inhibit full and frank discussion, but only if that would prejudice ‘effective conduct of public affairs’. Silver and Bronze groups are necessarily having to strike this balance constantly. What principles are they using?

¹ <https://www.ox.ac.uk/public-affairs>.

² <https://staff.admin.ox.ac.uk/structure-and-organisation/professional-services-and-university-administration>

³ <https://www.it.ox.ac.uk/chief-information-officer-cio>

⁴ <https://www.ox.ac.uk/public-affairs/about-pad/public-affairs-office>

⁵ <https://gazette.web.ox.ac.uk/subscribing-gazette>

⁶ https://staff.admin.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/staff/documents/media/blueprint_hilary_2020.pdf

⁷ <https://staff.web.ox.ac.uk/article/professor-louise-richardson-internal-communication-updates>

⁸ <https://staff.admin.ox.ac.uk/article/vice-chancellors-open-forum-18-june-2020>

⁹ Gold and Silver rather than Silver and Bronze.

¹⁰ <https://www.cam.ac.uk/coronavirus/news>

¹¹ Critics wanted to know who had made certain unpopular ‘decisions’ while the publication of the *Cambridge Reporter* had been suspended and with it normal governance.

¹² <https://www.ox.ac.uk/coronavirus/staff/planning-and-response/michaelmas-coordination-group>.

¹³ <https://www.ox.ac.uk/coronavirus/staff/planning-and-response/michaelmas-coordination-group>

¹⁴ <https://data.ox.ac.uk/doc/vacancy/136727>.

¹⁵ ‘There will, however, be a delay of four months between each meeting and the publication of the minutes, which thereafter will take place on a monthly basis,’ https://gazette.web.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/gazette/documents/media/23_july_2020_-_no_5285_redacted.pdf

Not
the
Gazette

NB The *Oxford Magazine* is not an official publication of the University. It is a forum for the free expression of opinion within the University.

The next issue of
Oxford Magazine
will appear in
fifth week

Virus-Ridden Governance

PETER OPPENHEIMER

In my commentary in the previous issue of *Oxford Magazine* I suggested, without giving chapter and verse, that in Britain COVID-19—or possibly the UK government’s handling of it—has drawn attention to the prevalence of another kind of virus, no less widespread and unsettling, and in existence for a good deal longer. Mis-governance and overbearing bureaucracy are now seen to afflict many institutions, undermining quality and morale. By no means only Oxford. In a letter to the *Financial Times* in mid-July Professor Jan Dalhuisen, formerly of King’s College London, pointed out that British universities generally “are run like corporates without corporate governance, and there is no accountability. Management is excessively rewarded, largely in undisclosed emoluments. It protects itself using public funds, has lost the confidence of staff and students, and is ill-prepared for the large redundancies and pay cuts that are becoming necessary.” The following month saw the publication of *Saving Britain’s Universities: Academic Freedom, Democracy and Renewal* by Lee Jones (Queen Mary, London) and Philip Cunliffe (U. of Kent), a 40-page report highlighting over-expansion, general mismanagement and crumbling academic standards.

Universities aside, one may mention the Church of England. Giles Fraser referred in *The Daily Telegraph* in early August to “the controlling behaviour of Church leaders. As a recent piece by Revd. Stephen Trott in the *Church Times* pointed out, the rot set in back in the 1970s, when the assets of individual parishes were effectively nationalised by the General Synod. “This enabled money to be redistributed from wealthy parishes to poorer ones, but it also spawned a burgeoning central administration that has since employed ever more accountants, administrators and archdeacons. Ever fewer communities, meanwhile, have their own vicars.”

Still further afield, in important areas of national policy-making, such as health and school education, there has been an unfortunate spread, dating chiefly from the Thatcherite 1980s, of what may now be called executive distancing. The idea was that, where possible, the levers of government should be autonomous agencies (“quangos”). Politicians could delegate correspondingly and avoid being held accountable. Their luck has now run out—as cuttngly explained by Daniel Hannan in *The Daily Telegraph* (23rd August):

“Well, we’ve got what we claimed to want, namely an administrative machine beyond the reach of our elected representatives. Our exams are run by Ofqual. (“Keep the politicians out of the picture!”) Our healthcare system is removed from political oversight. (“Hands off our NHS!”) Our epidemic preparedness is left to Public Health England. (“Listen to the experts!”) How, then, did we react when these public bodies messed things up? Did we pursue Ofqual....over the failure of its exam algorithms? Did we complain about the NHS’s calamitous decision to send unscreened patients into care homes in readiness for a tidal wave that never came? Did we demand to know why, as late as March [2020], PHE was still mainly fretting about unhealthy meals? Of course not. With a neat mental sidestep, we suddenly called

these agencies “the government”, and directed our rage at the politicians—the same politicians whom we wanted to be kept out of the picture.”

Which brings us back to the universities. Including Oxford. Fascinatingly, 10th September 2020 saw the publication of a joint Policy Paper by the Departments for Education and for Business (BEIS) entitled “Reducing Bureaucratic Burden in Research, Innovation and Higher Education.” The Ministerial foreword expresses concern at “major growth in bureaucracy over recent decades...., much of which has added limited value or in some cases led to negative behaviours or consequences. Too often administrative activities are a distraction from the core purpose of research and education providers.” Nor are words minced in the body of the Paper. The National Student Survey, for example, is all but consigned to the rubbish tip. “Since its inception in 2005, the NSS has exerted a downward pressure on standards within our higher education system [...] There is valid concern [...] that good scores can more easily be achieved through dumbing down and spoon-feeding students, rather than pursuing high standards and embedding the subject knowledge and intellectual skills needed to succeed in the modern workplace.” And so forth, at considerable length.

Such acknowledgment of error is a big step forward, even if the diagnosis is over-simplified and a cure not guaranteed. The Paper speaks of “root and branch reviews” and “radical changes”—including cutbacks in reporting requirements—both by the Office for Students and by the government research funders (UKRI and the NIHR). Time will tell whether the government is trying to have its cake and eat it, tinkering with procedures while preserving control. Distinctly unpromising is the total absence of numbers: by how much is the staffing of regulatory and supervisory bodies expected to be reduced?

Similar caution applies in spades to the final section of the paper, headed “Reductions in providers’ internal bureaucracy”. Providers, i.e. universities, are to ensure that “reductions in government or regulator imposed regulatory activity are not replaced with internal bureaucracy. In addition, we want them to go even further to enable academics to focus on front line teaching and research: stripping out their existing unnecessary internal bureaucracy, layers of management and management processes.”

Not only does the lack of numerical or quantitative targets make this a questionable hope. In the case of an institution like Oxford, the crucial qualitative issue has also been seriously misunderstood. The defining feature of Oxford’s diseased governance in the 21st century is not that the academic community is prevented from focussing “on front line teaching and research”. Entirely to the contrary, the academic community is compelled to focus on little else—having being organisationally excluded from central university policy formation, whether day-to-day or longer-term. It is this same exclusion, moreover, that has given free rein to the proliferation of internal university bureaucracy—in parallel to the external bureaucracy

admitted by the twin Ministries in their Policy Paper, but largely unconnected with it and infinitely more damaging both materially and morally to the individual University.

The internal malaise should have been explicitly considered in the Policy Paper, having its own roots in UK government action. In this case it was bipartisan reluctance during the 1990s to face up to the financial implications of large-scale university expansion. Ministers took refuge for some years in the fantasy that universities could be made to operate with an ever more exiguous financial base if they were run like a corporation, by a board of directors detached from the everyday concerns of academic existence. Individuals untroubled by experience of having actually worked in a university (Jarratt, Dearing, Lambert) were duly summoned to take this idea forward in a series of reports. The rest is history, summarized by the letter from Jan Dalhuisen quoted earlier. A more detailed account of what happened in Oxford is given in my article, "A Grim Anniversary", *Oxford Magazine* No. 415 (Noughth Week, Hilary Term 2020), and other items there referenced.

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One key illustration of what has gone wrong in Oxford is that the University has made no attempt to abstain from the "dumbing down" of academic standards noted in the Whitehall Policy Paper. It has in effect abandoned proper academic assessment for first degrees, preferring instead to highlight the push given by COVID-19 to "open-book exams", "digital assessments" and "mitigating circumstances processes". And it recruits thousands of additional fee-paying postgraduates to a ragbag of taught courses, typically of one year's duration. For these developments the academic community cannot escape co-responsibility, even though the assorted financial and other pressures imposed upon it by the central administration have left it with little choice. As the *Strategic Plan 2019-23* had disingenuously announced, "We will ensure that teaching and assessment at Oxford provide an equal opportunity for all students to achieve and demonstrate their full academic potential. We will work to reduce continuing gaps in attainment and encourage greater diversity in assessment." (Previously cited in Peter Oppenheimer, "Pretending to be the University", *Oxford Magazine* No. 410, Eighth Week Trinity Term 2019). In short, "All Must Have Prizes".

Several issues later of *Oxford Magazine* (No. 417, Fifth Week Hilary Term 2020), I noted in passing that "At least we have so far been spared embarrassing boasts in *Blueprint* to the effect that Oxford's 'world-class' teaching and examining systems result in 97 percent of undergraduates achieving either a First or an Upper Second-Class Honours degree." I spoke too soon. On 5th September 2020, just five days before the Whitehall Report on "dumbing down", *The Guardian* newspaper published its annual "University Guide" to British higher education. Oxford found itself in first position – rather than, as in preceding years, second or third. The Vice-Chancellor (Louise Richardson) was then publicised on the front page, hailing this piece of musical chairs as nothing short of a revolution in educational relevance and social justice.

"Oxford has been given the edge over Cambridge and St. Andrews by its superior track record of recruiting students with lower grades who go on to secure a first or a 2:1. Richardson says

this is the result of a concerted effort by the university to widen access, following widespread criticism of its slow progress. 'The socio-economic and ethnic diversity of our undergraduate body has been transformed over the past five years, and we see this as a terrific success. We are very proud of our achievement,' she says."

The message was reiterated a month later for Oxford's domestic consumption in the Vice-Chancellor's Oration.

Here too there is no shortage of dumbing down. The obfuscation of what has happened to degree standards is bad enough. Additionally, the comments on the undergraduate intake are at once misleading about the past and complacent about the present. The actual story of Oxford's undergraduate intake was meticulously summarised a year ago by Claire Hann and Danny Dorling, "A Changed Institution", *Oxford Magazine* No. 411 (Noughth Week Michaelmas Term 2019) – and duly ignored in the Vice-Chancellor's Oration. Nor did the latter recognise that the relation between general principles and *ad hoc* remedies might be an issue. What are we to make, for example, of the revival of closed scholarships – now for students identifying as black – only a few decades after they had been abolished as an unwelcome anachronism? In earlier periods they had, of course, served in several Oxford colleges to provide places for poorer or more remote sections of the population (and not only pupils from Eton or Westminster). What does it take for an access route to oscillate between respectability and embarrassment?

Then there is Oxford's work on coronavirus vaccine. In reaching agreement with AstraZeneca on the further development, production and distribution of a vaccine, "We were anxious to ensure, on the one hand, that we not be a party to profiteering during a pandemic and, on the other hand, that we not repeat the mistake of the early 40s, when Oxford academics discovered penicillin but handed all rights off to American companies." Poor history and obvious oversimplification of complex issues, all in the name of the world's No.1 University!

Oxford academics did not "discover" penicillin: they developed it into clinically usable form. And it was not a "mistake" to "hand all rights off to American companies." In "the early 40s" there was a war on. In February 1941, when that first patient was treated with penicillin in the Radcliffe Infirmary, Britain was the sole belligerent power confronting Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. There was no prospect of British industry being available to produce penicillin on a serious scale. The United States at that juncture was not only a non-belligerent – it was also taking its time to agree that Britain be supplied with urgently requested warships and other military items. The relevant "Lend-Lease" Act was signed into law by President Roosevelt only in March, a month after the first penicillin treatment. And when Howard Florey and Norman Heatley from the Dunn School crossed the Atlantic in June of that year, they found American pharma companies by no means falling over themselves to exploit the new therapy. Things speeded up after America entered the war – which was not until the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in December.

As for "profiteering", if Oxford's central administration was so concerned about AstraZeneca's ethics or business principles, there was no need to give it exclusive rights to produce an Oxford vaccine. A few paragraphs later the Oration turns to the University's own attempts at profiteering, here called "Innovation". The 200 spin-

out companies founded by O.U. Innovation in its 33-year existence have since 2011 attracted external investments of £3.2 billion; £856 million of it in the past 12 months. This capital appears to yield around 1 percent annually, a limited proportion of which accrues to the University. Altogether somewhat of a distraction. Far more profitable for Oxford to rattle the bowl than to spin out companies. That total of £3.2 billion is just slightly less than the aggregate of donations raised between 2004 and 2019 by the Development Campaign (“Oxford Thinking”).

The Vice-Chancellor proclaims her opinion that universities “have an ethical and intellectual responsibility to demonstrate the falsity of the logic that exiles blame, scapegoating outsiders, and withdrawing from international agreements that hold nations to the high standards of a joint account. We can also model the power of co-operation. The pandemic has highlighted the vital role played by universities in meeting global emergencies and finding solutions to problems at a speed and on a scale for which national governments often find themselves practically unprepared...”

It is never, as it happens, “universities” who co-operate. It is individual scholars or researchers or groups of them. The trouble with the hierarchs in Wellington Square is precisely that they don’t, apparently, recognise the difference. Whatever happens in Oxford they parade as their achievement. As for the claimed moral and practical superiority to elected governments, one should not perhaps be surprised at such breath-taking effrontery, given our administration’s demonstrable undermining of democratic self-rule within its own institution in recent times.

Linked with this objective have been two other key features of Oxford’s mis-governance over the past twenty years: divisiveness and profligacy. Imposed fragmentation of the academic community into Divisions, each directed by its corps of central administrators, was itself sufficient to eliminate consensus-based decision-taking in University affairs. It is reinforced by the dysfunctional nature of the single University Council, with its built-in subservience to the administrative hierarchy. The hierarchy in turn stifles opposition by concealing information about debatable projects and doing away whenever possible with substantive discussion in the sovereign assembly of Congregation. A perfect illustration was the conspiratorial procedures employed in the formation of Reuben, formerly Parks, College (see *Oxford Magazine* articles by Gill Evans, 2018-19, *passim*). Profligacy too was illuminated indirectly by the impressive gift of £80 million from the Reuben brothers to benefit the new collegiate institution. This sum is about 20 percent smaller than the University’s *annual* outlay on central administration, of which a considerably greater percentage reflects empire-building, not genuine needs.

More or less simultaneous with the foregoing has been the case of the Schwarzman Humanities Centre. This is to be “part-funded” by Stephen Schwarzman’s £150 million donation. How large a part has not been revealed, nor has the fact that the whole project (starting with the appointment of architects) is substantially donor-controlled, Schwarzman having assigned a team of officials to over-

see the University’s management. The University will be fortunate if it escapes with less than 100% matching of the initial sum.

The search—ongoing for a decade—after this Humanities white elephant reflects a mix of mentalities in the central hierarchy: obsession with building (“growing the estate”), aversion to autonomy of departments and colleges, and rivalry among the Divisional bureaucracies. In the words of the June 2019 Press Announcement: “At a time when significant investments are being made in scientific and technological research and development, this gift recognises the essential role of the humanities in helping society confront and answer fundamental questions of the 21st century.” The phrasing is familiar, echoing the motto of another white elephant, the Oxford Martin School, originally named the James Martin 21st Century School.

In any case humanity has understood since Diogenes that the humanities do not in general require expensive or purpose-built accommodation, all the more so when library material is accessible on-line. Much of the Schwarzman Centre is accordingly designated not for academic use at all, but for tourism, public engagement and theatrical or musical performances, always with the customary epithets (“landmark”, “state-of-the art”, “transformational”) indicative of over-spending. Here again Oxford already has a plethora of such cultural facilities, mostly under-visited—museums, gardens and auditoria—while possessing neither a drama school nor a conservatoire. In a word, the building, besides occupying prominent square-footage in central Oxford and costing the University many tens of millions never mind the running expense, will be strictly superfluous. We would be self-evidently better off without it.

Some academic opposition to Schwarzman was expressed in the later months of 2019. This was on ethical grounds, because of activities associated with his financial enterprise Blackstone. Towards the end of February 2020, following announcement of the architects and their previous contributions to Harvard, Princeton and Yale, a demonstration was held outside the Weston Library—yet a further white elephant, only smaller—partly against Blackstone itself, but more against the high-handed and ill-justified manner in which the Schwarzman money had been accepted by the University and space allocated for the building. COVID lockdowns across the UK were initiated three weeks later.

Since then the pandemic has altered life and work in all sections of the collegiate University, giving the central hierarchy a wonderful pretext for declaring that the place is united as never before, all under the banner of “One Oxford”. The truth is that differences are glossed over or pushed aside, not resolved. In the process, Wellington Square has exploited the pandemic as an opportunity not for open-minded reconsideration of priorities, either financial or otherwise, but rather to strengthen its own grip through assorted “task forces” (always a menacing appellation) and similar bodies—while crossing fingers that the academic community will finally knuckle under and give up on its democratic pretensions.

I am the Queen without a Name

*Hreorogar ond Hroðgar ond Halga til;
hyrde ic þæt [... ..On] elan cwen,
Heoðo-Scilfingas healsgebedda.*

*Heorogar and Hrothgar and Halga the good,
I heard that [...] was Onela's queen,
The War-Scylfing's consort.*

Beowulf, lines 61-63

Unnamed, I am no-name.
*Saga hwæt ic hatte?*¹
What the scribe had heard
Did not concern me.

My bound-brothers, Healfdene's boys,
Hold their heads high,
But the Battle-Scylfing's bedfellow
–*þæt wæs god cwen?*²–

Misses her mark in the manuscript.
If Onela threw his arms around my neck,
Healsgebedda (a neck-laced lover),
I slipped the noose and skittered away.

Elan: to trouble, to pain, to grieve

I was *nama-geornost*, name-yearning,
Geomuru ides, a sorry lass,
Until I found my fight,
My *ellen* (courage!) in your *elan*.

I'll not be your hall-game.
Your after-dinner entertainment,
Gold-laden in your gold-hall.

Your poetry's not my bone-home.
I cannot settle there.

Healsfæst (stiff-necked and stubborn)
I'll shape this song myself.

¹Say what I am called.

²That was a good queen.

Indeed

*Listen! We have heard of the Spear-Danes
in days gone by, of the glory of the kings
of that people, how their noblemen performed
courageous deeds!*

Beowulf, lines 1-3

Indeed.

We have heard of the Danes.
We never stop hearing about them.
Those death-and-glory Danes.
Them, their demons, and their glory-
days. Me, I'd prefer a little variation.

If you'd like to
listen,
this is our sisters' side of the story.

Grendel's Mother

For all your bluster, warrior-poet,
Your puffed-up preening,
Your sword-swagger and shield-shuffling,
You still won't look at me.

Petrifying people? That's not my style.
It's not my stare that needles your braggadocio.
Any road, you started it.

Edging me out, making me your *mearcstapa*,
your boundary-stalker, border-controller.
I never wanted to shoulder those lines.

You kettle me into the corners of your compounds,
Tuck me into the bottom drawer of your wordhoard,
Shushed and smothered by your fabrications.
Water-witch, she-wolf of the deep, troll-dam?

Give over. Don't be so nesh.

The Oxford Magazine is edited by

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&
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Literary Editor:
Jane Griffiths at Wadham

Wealththeow on the Whale-Road

Feud-flotsam,
I washed up here
On the turn
 of the tide,

Stepping to shore,
Sea-legs judder,
My foot floats
 suspended

Over sand. For
A second,
I am stateless,
 Buoyed

With possibility.
An empty shell,
I susurrate

*Scyldings
Scylfings
Shield-maiden.*

A Gift between Queens

Apple-fallow stallions
speed across the strand,
foam-flecked, saddle-bright,
slender and limber.

The wave-white sea gives chase,
fleet-footed with spray and spume,
as Beowulf sallies south to his homestead.

Horses for Hygelac, they stamp and snort,
sleek heads nod and jerk Hrothgar's greeting.
A *healsbeah* for Hygd, the burnished neck-ring,
ferries Wealththeow's wishes over the whale-road.

Breast-adorned by the ring-giving, she bridles—

Until Beowulf unbuckles his word-hoard,
unravels the yarn of that peace-weaver's present.

A finger hooked into that halter, Hygd unlatches
her mind and beckons us in.

LAURA VARNAM

Laura Varnam is the Lecturer in Old and Middle English Literature at University College, Oxford. She is the author of *The Church as Sacred Space in Middle English Literature and Culture* (2018) and her recent academic work has focused on medievalism and modern responses to medieval texts. She is the co-editor of the forthcoming essay collection *Encountering The Book of Margery Kempe* (with Laura Kalas) and she is currently writing a book on Daphne du Maurier. The poems published here form part of a sequence entitled *Her Wordhoard: Poems for the Women of Beowulf*. They are an attempt to see the Old English epic Beowulf from a new angle: to offer a new lyric space for female experience and to allow the women of the poem to speak for themselves.

The Palaeographer and his Cat

No more on dating or on attributions:
The *incipits* and *explicit*s are all set down.
Parchment or paper noted, size of folios measured,
Size of the written space, number of lines per page.
Collations finished—what quires are misplaced,
Identification of where folios are lost.
Glosses transcribed and marginalia listed.
Styles of rubrication, punctuation marks—
How the presentation of the text should work.
The provenance assessed: place-names investigated
And those of people mentioned. The copyists
Perhaps identified, through individualities
Of letter forms, aspect or duct, or *mise-en-page*,
Or writing on the lines or in-between,
The technicalities of learned expertise—
Of memorializing, bringing past to presence,
In the hope someone may be persuaded
To call up these manuscripts, or be intrigued
Enough to turn their pages, as I did.
Vain hope maybe!

But now my small black cat,
Climbs on my desk: it's nearly five o'clock,
Reminding me it's feeding time. Soft feet
Progress across the hard keyboard. 'Control'
And 'Save': he has a way of accessing 'Delete'.
He does not earn his keep like Pangur Ban:
His days of catching mice are long since gone.
He leads a quieter life—much on his own.
Like me, he senses things are closing down.

JOHN SCATTERGOOD

John Scattergood is Emeritus Professor of Medieval and Renaissance English in Trinity College Dublin and a Fellow Emeritus of the College. Between 2008 and 2015 he was Pro-Chancellor of the University of Dublin. In addition to his many academic books he has published two short books of poems—*In Leonardo's Garden* (Dublin, 2007) and *For Another Year* (Dublin, 2009).

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Leadership Threats to Shared Governance in Higher Education

ROBERT A. SCOTT

THE COVID-19 pandemic prompted the rapid turn to remote teaching and learning this past spring, uncertainty about on-campus and remote teaching and learning this year, dire enrollment forecasts due to lower than expected recruitment and reduced retention, and the curtailment of international student enrollment. These forces all contribute to the tense relations and loss of trust among trustees, faculty, and administrators.

Two dynamics in contemporary higher education disrupt the relations among boards of trustees, presidents, and campus faculty, and threaten the traditions of shared governance. The first is the way boards of trustees are composed. The second is the evolution of the college and university president's role from chief mission (or purpose) officer to chief executive officer. Both trends exacerbate the increasingly corporate style of higher education institutions and threaten shared governance.

A third factor is the failure of boards and presidents to prepare faculty members for their roles in governance and leadership. After all, faculty are closest to the students we are chartered to serve and are integral to the fulfillment of institutional missions. Shared governance is only possible if the parties to it are prepared for their roles in it.

Boards of Trustees

Under 10 percent of American college and university trustees have any professional experience in higher education. Yes, most graduated from college, most donate to a college, and many have children in college. But 90 percent have no professional experience in a college or university. It is hard to imagine a Wall Street firm or a Silicon Valley company declaring that 90 percent of its directors have no experience in the core activities of the enterprise. Why is higher education different in this way (Scott 2018)?

At public institutions, most trustees are appointed through a political process involving the state's governor and often members of the legislature. In rare cases, trustees are elected by the public at-large. Knowledge of higher education missions, governance, programming, academic freedom, finances, and related topics is not a consideration in the appointment or election. Nor are these topics considerations in the organization of a board and its leadership or in the composition of an affiliated fundraising foundation.

At independent colleges and universities, most trustees are selected for their philanthropic capacity and affinity to the institution. They are generally not selected for their governance acumen or knowledge of higher education's attributes and challenges. While some boards of trustees intentionally include academics from other institutions, these remain in the minority of cases.

Boards should support strong presidential leadership, but strong leadership does not mean ignoring the facul-

ty's role in campus governance. To follow that path often leads to a vote of "no confidence" in the president or the board, something that is happening more frequently now than ten years ago. This disrupts the campus and takes the focus away from student success, the purpose of the institution (Carter 2018).

Institutional Presidents

The role of campus presidents has evolved largely due to issues of funding. In public institutions, and even in many private institutions, presidents must spend increasing amounts of time seeking government support. This is due in part to the seemingly relentless cuts in state funding for higher education. Between 2008 and 2018, state funding for two- and four-year colleges was reduced by \$6.6 billion. This includes reductions in base institutional support, student financial aid funding, funding for facilities, and support for research. As one consequence, some state governing boards require that presidential and chancellor searches be open to candidates from outside academe (Seltzer 2019).

Problems in university governance and leadership often result from how campus presidents view their role in contrast to the role expected of them by university governing boards and faculty. Campus presidents have variously been described as cheerleaders, budget masters, lobbyists, sales reps, high-stakes panhandlers, promoters, and entrepreneurs. Too seldom are they thought of, or expected to serve as, educators, the keepers of the institution's mission and legacy for transformational teaching and learning.

In my experience, a university benefits most from a president who thinks of his or her role as the chief education or chief mission officer, one who has the trust and respect of faculty, staff, and students. Such a president can remind the campus community of the purpose and heritage of the institution. However, the temptations are great to act as if budget making and fundraising are divorced from student learning and faculty teaching.

Faculty

Faculty members, as a group and as individuals, are responsible for the following activities, among others, in fulfillment of an institution's mission:

- The effectiveness and assessment of teaching and advising
- The advancement of student skills and abilities in critical analysis and communication

- The curriculum, degree requirements, and experiential learning opportunities such as research projects, internships, fieldwork, and study in other cultures
- The extracurricular development of students through clubs and organizations
- The recruitment and nurturing of younger faculty

Unfortunately, few campuses devote resources to preparing faculty members for their roles and responsibilities for governance or for leadership in faculty committees and senates. As a consequence, faculty are sometimes criticized for not fulfilling their governing roles adequately. But the fault lies with trustees and presidents who pay too little attention to this important dimension of university governance and leadership.

On some campuses, the college bargaining unit inserts itself into the governance process by claiming that it represents the faculty in shared governance. I do not agree. A collective bargaining agreement is agreed upon by the governing board and the faculty union to delineate working conditions, compensation, and the procedures for settling disputes. It does not relate to the faculty's governing role in academic programs and quality, admissions standards, service on institutional committees, and related responsibilities. When the two roles become merged, tensions usually result. But tension is not necessarily bad, especially during a pandemic when trustees and administrators may disregard the norms of shared governance and the faculty union can give the faculty a stronger voice. The board's desire for enrollment and tuition revenue must be balanced by concerns about safety and academic integrity.

Balancing Presidential Ambition, Institutional Mission, and Shared Governance

The board is responsible for adopting the mission of a college or university and then must seek state government approval to set or change the institution's charter. It also must seek approval from the regional accrediting body. A mission cannot be changed by fiat, as a corporate board might in changing from manufacturing to consulting. In evaluating a university's proposed change in mission, the state agency and the accrediting team will ask about the governance processes used in resetting the mission.

The governance system to be evaluated includes the commitment to what is called "shared governance." This is described in a covenant adopted in 1966 by the American Council of Education, the Association of Governing Boards of Colleges and Universities, and the American Association of University Professors. This statement of principles was built on a long history of efforts to define the roles of trustees in overall fiduciary responsibility for a campus or system; the president's role as the executive responsible for fulfilling the mission in a legally, ethically, and financially sound manner; and the faculty's role in setting academic standards and admission requirements, establishing the curricula, hiring and nurturing faculty, maintaining institutional and programmatic accreditation, and participating in strategic planning, setting priorities, and searches for senior administrators.

By shared governance, we do not mean coequal authority, as the authorities of the president and the faculty are delegated by the trustees but guided by tradition and legal precedent. Some argue that shared governance is no

longer relevant at a time of serious challenges and stresses in higher education. They assert that "waiting for the faculty" slows down the process of decision-making when institutions should be nimble and flexible in responding to the demands of the marketplace. At the same time, boards are criticized by faculty for appointing presidents, increasing health insurance fees, reducing pension contributions, substituting part-time for full-time faculty, cutting programs, or approving capital projects without campus input in general and faculty input in particular.

In response to these criticisms, we should recall that colleges and universities are organizations with long time horizons. Too often, businesses focus on short-term results that seem to undercut their long-term viability. The late David Riesman said that the job of the trustee board is to save the institution of the future from the actions of the present.

Governance and leadership require trust. Trust is built by regular and honest communication between the parties responsible for fulfilling the university's mission: the board as fiduciary responsible for the alignment of mission, goals, strategies, and results; the president as chief purpose officer charged with keeping the focus on the mission; and the faculty, who are usually closest to the students, as guardians of the academic mission. These three must work together in mutually respectful ways if the institution is to thrive.

Mission

The mission statement defines the purpose of an institution. For all but very specialized universities, the primary purpose is for undergraduate student learning and graduation. The overall undergraduate graduation rates in the United States implicate not only the preparation of the students admitted but also the systems in place to support student success. Unfortunately, the average graduation rate among four-year colleges and universities indicates that trustees, administrators, and faculty are not fulfilling their responsibilities very well.

The mission for teaching encompasses both general education and the disciplined study of a major field of study. The traditional elements of undergraduate education include the advancement of knowledge, both general and expert, skills such as writing and speaking, abilities such critical analysis, and values such as teamwork and respect for others.

The terms *research* and *scholarship* are often used interchangeably, although scholarship includes keeping up to date in one's field through reading, attending conferences, and participating in seminars. While it is not necessary to be an active researcher to be a great teacher, it is essential for faculty to teach students how to conduct research. (Many believe that active scholarship is related to effective teaching.)

Also, the mission for scholarship or research is often misunderstood. When most people think of these functions they consider "bench" research in a laboratory or original research in primary sources found in specialized libraries. The late Ernest Boyer, former US secretary of education and president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, helped us contemplate the types of research and scholarship conducted by faculty members—and their students. He suggested four catego-

ries of scholarship: (1) discovery; (2) integration; (3) application; and (4) pedagogy (Boyer 1990).

Each form of research and scholarship can have value, but they are not equally eligible for support by government agencies and private foundations. A faculty member can have a robust agenda for research leading to new knowledge or new models yet not bring grants to the campus. Nevertheless, each form of scholarship should be supported by the reward system of an institution as important for faculty and students.

Unprepared Trustees

Unfortunately, boards of trustees are generally not prepared to govern such an enterprise. While every state requires hairstylists to receive certification before they can serve the public, trustees are poorly prepared and not required to demonstrate proficiency. There are certification programs for hospital trustees and education programs for corporate directors. Yet few states require training for college and university trustees who are fiduciaries for the more than \$1.2 trillion in operating funds and endowments held by institutions nationwide.

Michigan State University, Penn State University, the University of Maryland, and the University of Virginia, among others, offer disastrous examples of boards exercising inadequate oversight. This seems to be the case especially when the board's leadership focuses on preserving and enhancing the institutional "brand," or ranking, or athletic prowess, instead of fostering academic excellence and student success.

The most effective board members bring questions to their meetings, or ask them beforehand, because they have read and thought about the materials sent in advance. They prepare by reading journals such as *Trusteeship*, online media such as *Inside Higher Ed*, the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, and books about college and university governance and leadership (Mitchell and King 2018; Scott 2018).

When considering prospective board members, previous professional experience in higher education is often undervalued. Some of the most effective boards include senior academics or experienced leaders from other, non-competing institutions, even if they cannot give more than token financial donations. They often are better positioned to ask strategic questions and to offer responses to ill-advised proposals for board action.

Board members should be aware of the key indicators of institutional vulnerability and vitality. These include important academic decisions related to faculty personnel matters as well as financial ratios, accounts receivable, and cash flows from operations. They also include admissions "funnel" data from year to date and over time, comparative progress in graduation rates over time against both peer and aspirational institutions, employer assessments of alumni, licensure exam results of seniors and recent graduates, tuition discount and net revenue trends, diversity measures, and accreditation reviewer comments.

What is the board's role in faculty appointments? Some argue that there is none because the board is not competent to judge the academic credentials of candidates for appointment, reappointment, tenure, promotion, sabbaticals, and so on. While I agree with this argument, it is not

sufficient. A faculty appointment can be the equivalent of a \$4 million capital investment when one counts salary and benefits for thirty or more years.

An investment of this size in a facilities renovation would require a great deal of scrutiny. And so should the faculty appointment. But instead of evaluating individual credentials, the board should be assured that approved personnel policies and procedures were followed assiduously. The board should be shown how this appointment helps fulfill the mission for student success, program improvement, and institutional reputation; how the appointment helps achieve goals for diversity; how it fits into the budget; and how the use of the budgeted faculty line in this way does not add to an imbalance of full-time and part-time positions with other departments, among other considerations.

Universities hold a public trust because they are publicly chartered, exempt from taxation on their educational activities, have the authority to issue tax-exempt bonds, and can receive gifts that grant tax benefits to donors. By public charter, institutions can receive donations for scholarships, professorships, buildings and other spaces, science and engineering equipment, endowments for specific or general uses, and art and other objects, among other possibilities.

There are professional programs and literature available for trustees, and regional accrediting associations provide criteria on good governance, but some think a further step is desirable. States can provide a form of certification for board members of public and private universities. After all, state charters are the institutions' fundamental governing documents. And while it may be easier for a state to mandate such training for public college and university trustees than for private boards, the model can be adopted universally. For example, each state has an association of independent colleges for joint lobbying and purchasing. They also could sponsor joint training and certification programs for the trustees of member institutions.

In addition, private foundations that support higher education and express concerns about the lack of success in achieving key university goals, such as graduation rates, could sponsor seminars on these topics. Audit firms and bond rating agencies could do the same for their clients and provide a certificate of completion for members.

We invest billions of dollars in students and institutions each year. Shouldn't we expect college and university trustees to be prepared for their duties (Mitchell and King 2018; Scott 2018)?

Consequences

When boards and presidents operate in a corporate manner, certain consequences seem inevitable. The focus is on short-term thinking rather than the long-term, and on transactional relationships rather than on the transformational mission of higher education.

Furthermore, board members, and presidents, tend to think of faculty members as employees with a job, not as partners in governance. In order to save money, the board fills full-time faculty lines with part-time teachers who often lack the time and private office space necessary for advising, including students in research, sponsoring clubs and organizations, and nurturing younger faculty.

Another consequence is for boards to think of students as customers and focus on external relations, “branding,” reputation management, and marketing even more than on the alignment of mission, goals, and results.

Unfortunately, the dismal graduation rates nationally indicate a disconnect between the mission for student learning and graduation rates. The six-year graduation rate for first-time, full-time undergraduate students who entered a four-year degree program in fall 2011 was 60 percent. The rate was 60 percent at public institutions, 66 percent at nonprofit colleges, and 21 percent at for-profit institutions. For institutions with selective admissions, the rate was 87 percent. For nonselective institutions, the rate was 31 percent.

Another consequence of the CEO phenomenon is the attention to size and scale, additional administrative roles to allow for the delegation of new responsibilities, the introduction of bonuses as a component of compensation, and the expanded use of consultants, even when required expertise can be found on campus in the faculty. This “business model” gives priority to revenues over results, reputation over accountability, and prestige over student success.

Presidential Selection

Colleges and universities compose search committees so they can look far and wide to create a diverse pool of candidates for a position, whether an assistant in admissions, a full professor, or a president. While trustees typically do not serve on searches for faculty and staff, they do comprise the majority of those on a committee searching for a president, and one or two of them will chair or cochair the committee. The remainder of the presidential search committee ideally will consist of a senior dean, two faculty, and two students (one undergraduate and one in a graduate program on campus), or some close approximation to this model. Unfortunately, this often is not the case and faculty are only minimally involved if at all.

An honest and active search will serve the institution well. Such a search can mean that the person selected, even if an internal candidate already on campus, has been compared to a diverse and competitive field. This will reduce second-guessing about why a particular person was chosen.

Presidential searches at public universities and college in states with “sunshine laws” can be challenging. These laws require that the names of candidates be made public, thereby reducing candidacies by experienced leaders who do not want to take the chance that knowledge of their candidacy would undermine their leadership on the campus they already serve.

It is important to include faculty members on the committee. First, an external search requires discipline in terms of defining the characteristics of leadership desired and the vetting of any internal candidates against external standards. Second, faculty must be included on the committee not only as an example of shared governance but also to demonstrate an expectation of the faculty’s role on campus.

An executive search firm may be hired to assist the search. Both not-for-profit and for-profit firms can be helpful. As with any other consultant, success depends upon the clarity of the assignment, the leadership of the

chair or cochair, and the search committee’s commitment to adhere to the search goals and criteria. It is important to find the right person, even if it requires extending the deadline.

The board will most likely delegate the task of soliciting and interviewing potential search firms to the trustees on a presidential search committee or to a subset of the executive committee. The board chair or another designated person should ask the campus president or board administrator to compile profiles of several firms to be reviewed. The chair or a representative might also ask the trustees of other institutions for the names of firms they have engaged for a similar assignment. If one of the campus trustees is from higher education, he or she probably has knowledge of available firms.

Concerns for Higher Education

Multiple challenges face higher education governance, including enrollment forecasts, ethical lapses due to intense competition, and tuition discounting.

Enrollment Forecasts

The forecast for college enrollments is daunting. The number of students enrolled has dropped below 18 million for the first time since 2007. There were 231,000 fewer students enrolled in 2019 than the year before. The prospects for recovery in the near term are not bright (Busta 2019). The pandemic and prospect of remote learning are also affecting the matriculation plans of high school students and recent graduates.

The US birth count fell to less than 3.8 million in 2018, the lowest number of births in thirty-two years. In comparison, the count peaked in 2007 at 4.3 million babies just before the Great Recession. As a consequence, the number of high school graduates, the prime source of college enrollments, is projected to decline, although not uniformly across the country. College-age potential students will decline by 5 percent in the Northeast and Midwest by the mid-2020s. A second drop of close to 10 percent will occur between 2016 and 2031, partly as a result of the decline in domestic births since 2007. The South and West, however, will see some increase in high school graduates, with the two regions soon accounting for 50 percent of high school graduates, up from one-third in earlier years.

International student enrollment in colleges nearly doubled between 2008 and 2016, but several factors militate against continued growth. First, US government policies have started to limit the number of new entrants by reducing the numbers from certain countries and by making visa applications more difficult. Second, the countries that were the biggest sources of international students, China, India, and Saudi Arabia, have changed their policies about student mobility and have increased higher education opportunities at home. Finally, some analysts suggest that the gun culture in America, combined with shootings at schools and colleges, have given pause to international students considering study here.

While institutions have largely weathered earlier economic and demographic challenges, the enterprise now faces an unusual array of forces. A combination of factors—including birth rates, visa restrictions, the eco-

conomic collapse resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, and rising skepticism about the value of higher education—all produce significant challenges for enrollments and institutional viability in the United States. These prospects, as well as growing inequality of opportunity due to tuition and fee increases, should be a top priority for campus governance.

Ethical Lapses

The competition for students and recognition is intense. Colleges and universities are chartered by a state to be dedicated to the pursuit of truth through evidence that is not affected by individual beliefs or superstitions. They have missions dedicated to the advancement of knowledge, the preparation of new generations of learners through transformational teaching, and service to the society that grants them special status. For the most part, the higher education enterprise has fulfilled these mandates for many years.

Therefore, it is especially troubling when any college administrators distort and falsify data in order for their institutions to appear to be what they are not. Those who succumb to such temptations for competitive reasons such as college rankings, or in response to unrealistic goals, tarnish the image of higher education at-large and mislead the public, which expects accurate information.

As recent news articles have revealed, some colleges and universities have been found to falsify admissions, academic, and financial data. *Inside Higher Ed* has reported instances of institutions fudging the numbers, often in an attempt to rise in the *U.S. News & World Report* “Best College” rankings. There are reports of institutions incorrectly reporting their graduation rates, overstating the average financial aid awarded, and underreporting enrollment so that the average funding per student appeared higher than it actually was. Other examples include inflated data on research grant funding, claims of higher rates of medical school graduates entering primary care practice, and incorrect data on the number of full-time faculty.

Institutions also have been known to reduce the number of alumni counted in the denominator of their annual giving calculation in order to show a higher percentage of donors. Still others have been known to omit the SAT scores of students in an “opportunity program” in order to increase the average reported. Another “trick” is to count gifts from bequests as current donations even when the documented commitment was made and recorded years earlier. Still another tactic is to report enrollment projections without showing the assumptions for the calculations. Unfortunately, demographic forecasts may increase the pressures of competition.

Most examples of “gaming the numbers” seem related to public relations attempts to appear stronger than competitors. The focus on form over substance, of marketing over mission, is another example of corporate instead of educational behavior. Other actions seem designed to impress the board of trustees as well as those on campus with the financial success gained from one year to the next. In these cases, the astute board member and faculty leader should note whether the source of data for each year is different. For example, one case I examined as a consultant appeared to show financial results for the current year

without acknowledging that the draw from endowment income was included in the calculation, something that was not included in showing the results for the previous year. The result: a surplus in the more recent year and a deficit in the prior year.

Often, outside agents, including publication editors, investigative reporters, and accrediting agencies review the data and question the reports. However, these and other examples illustrate why board members should be prepared, in a collegial and noncombative manner, to question assumptions and request backup material to support claims that don’t appear quite right. In order for this to happen, trustees require orientation, training, and access to reading materials and conference attendance, not just at the time of election but throughout their terms.

Tuition Discounting

One consequence of the corporatization of higher education is that students are viewed as customers, and the pricing of tuition becomes a sales point. Most colleges and universities do not have sufficient endowment to offer need-based scholarship assistance to all who are eligible for it. One way to supplement government-sponsored financial aid is to create scholarships by discounting tuition. That is, the \$10,000 scholarship offered is not offset by other revenue; it is a discount that results in less net tuition revenue to pay salaries and the light bill.

The advent of college “rating” publications added to the consumer approach of colleges and families. Once the ratings began giving extra weight to the average SAT scores of entering students, and once it was realized that certain private foundations favored colleges with more selective admissions, institutions began offering “merit” scholarships to students whose scores would boost the average. Colleges and universities had been doing something similar for decades in order to recruit quarterbacks and forwards, so it was an easy step to use the same technique for academic and other qualifications.

Unfortunately, this use of merit aid had three consequences that may not have been contemplated. First, the focus on “merit” aid resulted in less money available for those whose family incomes showed demonstrated need. Second, in order to generate the budget for discounting, tuition had to be increased for all students, thus driving up the annual cost for everyone. Third, the use of discounting in response to the competition for students in general and for those with particular talents and characteristics resulted in less net tuition revenue, with some colleges discounting by as much as 60 percent, an unsustainable practice.

Tuition is set by the board of trustees. It is a matter of governance. The process should be transparent and take into account issues of affordability, priority, and fairness, not the maximization of revenue over expenses as in a business enterprise. The focus should be on purpose, not profit.

Conclusion

The dynamics of the corporate university can be changed with the proper incentives introduced by accrediting bodies and national associations. They also can be changed

by using the instruments available to train trustees, presidents, and faculty leaders in the unique traditions of governance in colleges and universities. An institution of higher education is a moral enterprise, chartered by the public to serve a public purpose, and committed to the advancement of knowledge, skills, abilities, and values. This takes money, of course, but the pursuit of money must be in the service of the mission.

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Whose lives matter?

MICHAEL BIGGS

ON 25 May, a white police officer in Minneapolis apparently suffocated George Floyd, an African American. On 20 June, during LGBT Pride Month, a Libyan refugee allegedly stabbed to death three gay men in Reading: James Furlong, Joe Ritchie-Bennett, and Dr David Wails. In each case, the perpetrator is awaiting trial for murder. Those trials will presumably reveal whether their actions were motivated (respectively) by racism or by homophobia.

Searching for the names of the victims on the domain ox.ac.uk enables us compare Oxford's response to these tragedies, one 4,000 miles away and one 30 miles away.

A small sample:

University's response to killing in Minneapolis: *'In light of the traumatic effect of the killing of George Floyd, and the global focus it has brought to communities and organisations to take further action on racism, the University is reaffirming its unequivocal abhorrence of and opposition to racism against Black and Minority Ethnic people and discrimination in all its forms.'* Response to killings in Reading: none.

Wycliffe Hall's response to killing in Minneapolis: *'The death of George Floyd has shocked and appalled us, but it is forcing us as a society, as a church, as a college and as individuals to examine ourselves, to identify and repent of the biases, conscious or unconscious, that we find there.'* Response to killings in Reading: none.

Somerville College's response to killing in Minneapolis: *'Like so many, we at Somerville have been appalled and*

angered by the scenes of violence and oppression that have followed the murder of George Floyd.' Response to killings in Reading: none.

Law Faculty's response to killing in Minneapolis: *'Almost two weeks have passed since the death of George Floyd in the United States. We have since witnessed a nation in turmoil in the grip of racism.'* Response to killings in Reading: none.

Department of Earth Sciences' response to killing in Minneapolis: *'Racial discrimination was on recent public display with the horrific killing of George Floyd in the USA. At this time more than ever we stand in support of our Black, Asian, minority ethnic members and renew our commitment to expunge discrimination and racism in the Earth sciences.'* Response to killings in Reading: none.

In total, the name 'George Floyd' appears 188 times on the domain ox.ac.uk. The domain contains no mention of 'James Furlong', 'David Wails', or 'Joe Ritchie-Bennett'. (Google search conducted on 16 September. Searching for 'Forbury Gardens', the location in Reading where they were killed, yields no relevant mentions.)

The comparison provokes several questions. Has colonization by U.S. social media companies diminished the value of local lives relative to American ones? Does the moral valence of a killing depend on the identity of the perpetrator as much as the identity of the victim? What determines whether particular deaths become invoked by institutions to advance a totalizing metanarrative?

NOTICE

Jane Griffiths, literary editor of the *Oxford Magazine*, will be pleased to read literary submissions of any description—e.g. verse, critical prose, very short stories, segments of dialogue, reviews of new dramatic productions and books, etc. Submissions should be no longer than 750 words, and where possible should be sent by email attachment to jane.griffiths@ell.ox.ac.uk together with a two-sentence bio.

Scientists in The National Archives

A.D. HARVEY

BACK in 1985 an article by Michael Jubb in *History of Science* remarked 'it is clear that historians of science are not heavy users of the public records.' An instance of this is Jeremy Bernstein's *Hitler's Uranium Club; the Secret Recordings at Farm Hall* (New York, 1996), which analyses the transcripts of the secretly recorded conversation of German nuclear scientists detained at Farm Hall, near Huntingdon, after the Second World War. The German scientists prepared a round robin proposing their return to Germany and the re-establishment of research into nuclear physics under Allied control. According to Jeremy Bernstein it was never sent. A copy in the National Archives at Kew, stamped 'Top Secret', has a typed note stating that it is 'copy no.8', which suggests quite otherwise. (CAB 126/333) Similarly when Nobel laureate Werner Heisenberg, effectively leader of the interned scientists, wrote to their main contact in the British scientific community, future Nobel Prize-winner Patrick Blackett, Professor of Physics at Manchester University and the Admiralty's wartime Director of Operational research, Bernstein noted 'It is a pity that we do not have Blackett's reaction to Heisenberg's remarkable letter.' In fact a copy of Blackett's reply – 'You have explained your attitude very clearly . . . I think I may say that your letter will be of considerable assistance to us in our efforts to get what we think a rational treatment of the problem' – is in the same thick file.

Blackett, as it happened, was one of those who had his doubts regarding the direction research into nuclear physics was taking. In November 1943 it was reported 'Blackett is here preaching against employment of scientists in Tube Alloys [code-name for the Manhattan Project, the development of the atomic bomb] and owing to his unique position he may have a disturbing effect.' (CAB 126/331) There were also suspicions about Wallace Akers, wartime Director of Atomic Energy Research in Britain but also an employee of ICI; Leslie Groves, the American general in charge of the Manhattan Project 'is adamant about Akers and says that while he cannot refuse him access to the [gaseous] diffusion project, he took care to make it perfectly clear that co-operation is unwelcome. He is surprised under the circumstances that Akers is coming [to the US] and suggests that it is very unwise.' (ibid.)

The betrayal of atomic bomb secrets to the Russians by Alan Nunn May and Klaus Fuchs naturally caused a major stir in Whitehall, and amongst those who came under suspicion was another future Nobel Prize-winner, Rudolf Peierls. His mail was surreptitiously examined by MI5 for some weeks but G.R. Mitchell of MI5 concluded that they could 'regard the possibility of his being a source of leakage as exceedingly remote. I note that PEIERLS agrees with the Association [of Scientific Workers] in desiring a reduction in the length of Nunn MAY's sentence, but I believe the proposition that all persons who think the sentence excessive are Communist sympathisers is false.' (KV 2/1658 – and see also MI5's files on Bruno Pontecorvo at KV 2/1887 to 1894)

Amongst those coming under suspicion in the post-Sec-

ond World War period was Carl Gustav Jung, who supposedly 'provided much of the philosophical, or perhaps one should say pseudo-philosophical, background to the Nazi movement', though 'apparently a Swiss citizen and presumably immune' from prosecution as a war criminal. (FO 371/57639) Even at the time some Foreign Office officials thought this view might be a little extreme.

Dating from a generation earlier are a couple of items by J.J. Thomson, OM, PRS, winner of the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1906. In February 1915 Thomson wrote to G.D. Tatham, a staff officer at the War Office, on behalf of his son G. P. Thomson: 'George after three months service in France has just come home to rest after a severe attack of influenza which was aggravated by his being shelled out of his bed when his temperature was highest. You suggested that when he came home on leave we might seize the opportunity of seeing whether there might be some work where his special training in mathematics and physics might make his services of more use to the country than those he could render as a subaltern.' (WO 339/16696) G.P. Thomson was duly transferred to non-combatant duties, and was thereby spared the slaughter on the Western Front and enabled to survive to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Physics for 1937. Having become Master of Trinity College, Cambridge in 1918, J.J. Thomson also wrote a report on how the government scheme for the higher education of ex-service students had 'raised rather than lowered the average intellectual ability of the College.' (ED 47/160)

Government involvement in Higher Education goes back further than one might think. As far back as 1889 T.H. Huxley, one of the most eminent scientists of the day, defender of the theories of Charles Darwin, and Dean of the Normal School of Science (fore-runner of today's Imperial College) wrote to a government official, 'I have long ago given up the attempt to comprehend the course adopted by the Treasury in relation to the action of the State in respect of Scientific education', which he characterised as a policy 'of hindering without serious purpose of doing more; of interposing passive obstacles in the way of fulfilment of engagements; of niggling at the well earned payments for hard labour without saving sixpence to the State and at the risk of driving away in disgust the people who can best help you.' (ED 23/951) This does not sound altogether unfamiliar. And there is plenty more in The National Archives.

The Admiralty's file on Chaim Weizmann's patent for the production of synthetic acetone (ADM 1/8451/65), W.G. Penny's numerous papers on the blast, shock and pressure effects of bombs (HO 195/9 to 13) and Solly Zuckerman's memo on the possibility of a one thousand megaton thermo-nuclear device that would incinerate everything within a one hundred mile radius, annotated by prime minister Harold Macmillan in a sardonic mood 'A most encouraging report. Progress continues.' (PREM 11/3708) may today only be of antiquarian interest, and of course it has to be admitted that all the documents in The National Archives, whether or not science-related,

were written not for posterity but to answer the demands of their day. But that's precisely why it's odd that historians of science make so little use of them.

The letter and number groups in brackets are the call marks of documents in The National Archives at Kew.

Because of the current COVID-19 pandemic visits to The National Archives at Kew need to be booked in advance on a booking site that nine times out of ten tells one that no more seats are available.

Rhode Islandia

BILL WHELAN

THEY say that Finland is where Scandinavia turns into Russia. Well, in America, Rhode Island is where New England turns into Banditistan. The state is ethnic and easy going and insular. Oh, yes, and corrupt. Think of Dorset gone ethically astray with the sea as a picturesque backdrop to all sorts of rackets and schemes. Even its place names are like Dorset's, an olio—some like Galilee and Jerusalem picked from the Bible, others like Metacom and Kickamuit borrowed from the native Indians.

There is an entrenched Italian element in Rhode Island which is so particular it might be lifted from the densest back street in Palermo. It is an element that can be traced back a century or so ago to the massive influx via Trans-Atlantic liners. One of their descendants put it bluntly as to the conditions they faced then: 'Who picks up their entire family and leaves everything behind to bob seasick in the ocean for more than a week and then land in a place where you don't speak the language and aren't entirely welcome? You'd have to be pretty desperate, right?'

These immigrants must have found their new homeland initially too unadorned for their liking. They'd come from a society where, in the words of John Henry Newman:

"A vast number of sacred truths are taken for granted as facts by a Catholic nation, in the same sense as the sun in the heavens is a fact... A bad Catholic does not deny hell, for it is to him an incontestable fact... Their ideas, of whatever sort, good, bad, and indifferent, rise out of the next world... If they sing and jest, the Madonna and Bambino, or St. Joseph, or St. Peter, or some other saint, is introduced, not for irreverence, but because these are the ideas that absorb them... And hence, I say, in their fairs and places of amusement, in the booths, upon the stalls, upon the doors of the wine-shops, will be paintings of the Blessed Virgin, or St. Michael, or the souls in purgatory, or of some Scripture subject." (Certain Difficulties Felt by Anglicans in Catholic Teaching, 1850)

They tried to replicate portions of their earlier life back home. In the capital Providence social clubs appeared representing every suitable city in Italy. There were religious processions debouching out of Romanesque churches. Extended families took over whole tenements. These immigrants took employ in bakeries and clothing stores, and worked as tailors, barbers, cobblers, carpenters and tin-smiths. They bunched up at construction sites. Laborers became contractors who in turn became property owners. Mobility found some of their sons attending Harvard

Medical School. The state had no medical school of its own, so the exodus out to Massachusetts. Their daughters married and had their wedding announcements appear on the Society pages next to photos of wan Yankee brides. Others took the low road. They joined the Mafia where they ran gambling, loan sharking and bootlegging operations. They produced cadavers at an industrial rate.

There is something hard nosed and unyielding about them. Yet the current governor comes from that stock and she shows herself most mobile and methodical in dealing with the C-virus. She is whip-smart; her resumé properly Ivied—Harvard College & Yale Law. Then there is the traffic judge who is the star of a local TV show *Caught in Providence*. He appears solicitous to the Hispanic immigrants caught up in some violation, many with small children slung to their hips and not from the look of it coming from easy circumstances. I chanced on the judge at the central public library where he was going through microfilm. I asked him how he'd come to take that approach. He said his parents were immigrants from Italy. They spoke little English. That meant he had to act as their interpreter when dealing with officialdom. He understood what it means to be an outsider. So there is this whole other side to the Italian element. One day I found my barber—out of Messina some 55 years ago—off in a corner reading Eric Newby's *Love and War in the Apennines*.

For much of the 20th century it was the custom of the state's citizens to pick US senators from old patrician families. This from an electorate which was solidly working class and unionized. It was as if they wanted representation in Washington that was beyond reproach. One of these senators was Claiborne Pell. He was known to wear threadbare suits and drive second hand cars. That is so New England Yankee—*Use it up, Wear it out, Make do or Do without*. Yankees held sway at places like the Providence Athenaeum, a bookish refuge embosomed in Greek Revival and sitting calm and cool aside College Hill, and at The Dunes Club situated down Narragansett Bay on a distant sandbar. There, amid the chic cabanas and dusty clay tennis courts, debutantes whiled the summer days away entertaining homesick Naval officers from nearby bases.

Two worlds—ethnic and old stock—which assorted on occasion out of convenience or over a particular cause. Other times they went their own way.

These immigrants arrived in a state which was always set apart from the rest of New England. It was given to

cranky notions and errant pursuits. An orthodox Massachusetts Puritan, seeing the Rhode Island colony as a ready haven for dissent, called it 'the fog end of creation.' It was the last state to ratify the Constitution and it was the only state in the union to persist in celebrating Victory over Japan Day. Its 18th century slave traders were as brazen as its rum runners were during Prohibition. By the mid-1800s it was indulging in wholesale vote buying and graft. Just over a century later Providence was called the cocaine capital of the region. Rhode Island was high-iced ages before the Mafia appeared at its port. Newporters early on crewed on pirate ships in untold numbers. They raided as far as the Red Sea and saw the varied loot—gold, ivory, silk—make its way to their home port. A settlement born of comity wound up a state seesawed by corruption.

* * *

I caught glimpses of some of this as a youth in the 1950s and 1960s. One side of my family belonged to the summer colony crowd. They were supposed to be above the salt. They dwelt in 'old houses with all the cargo of memories they carry, with their shining floors of polished walnut, the white linen in their cupboards, the laces at their windows that have served unfrayed so many generations.' But they were not above acts as devious as any Mafioso.

There is plenty of evidence, for instance, that our immediate circle committed arson just under a century ago. I am talking about factory owners and bank executives—mill men and money men. A utility company tried to build a massive facility, with smoke stacks belching out soot and ash, on top of our seaside settlement. The company sent around a rep who, playing an effaced role, offered generous terms without revealing the ultimate intent. Word of this deception leaked out to the settlers—one of whom had served in the ordnance corps in the First World War while another ran a hardware store with access to accelerants. So off season and at night—when this district was nearly deserted—several properties belonging to the utility caught fire and wound up as charcoal. These Yankees then practiced an omertà as tight lipped as any Sicilian brigand.

This occurred in Bristol, an old harbor town. In 1927 its police busted a local for making moonshine whiskey. They found her at home with barrels of mash and bushels of potatoes. The suspect, on being questioned, was blasé: 'Back in Brazil and Portugal ... anyone can make moonshine and are not bothered by the police.' Several streets away from 'Moonshine Rosie' lived the Hereshoffs. They were boat builders and naval architects who turned out yachts for swank clientele like the Morgans and Whitneys. They rethought the production process and turned out sailboats which won a half dozen America's Cups. The town was pretty blithe about these affairs, whether high or low, straight or crooked, immigrant or old-line. To Bristolians, the world was an enticement.

* * *

In a way Rhode Island is really an outplanting—a Gibraltar or Alexandria or Goa. When I visited Portuguese Macau in the mid-1980s I felt immediately at home. All the elements were there: the mélange of ethnicities, the sight of the sea at every turn, the casual, concessionist circumstances—a reproach to their bigger, bossy neighbors. The Mediterranean somehow retains its influence at points so far flung

as Narragansett Bay and the Pearl River Delta. 'What we claim as Mediterranean is not a liking for reasoning and abstractions, but its physical life—the courtyards, the cypresses, the strings of pimientos.' Albert Camus's Latin culture—in the shape of a stream of immigrants from Italy and Portugal, Cape Verde and the Azores—became impasted on the state's bare-boned Yankee foundation. The two elements never completely fused, but they did occasionally bond over such matters as political campaigns and athletic engagements.

That *pied noir* Camus would delight at seeing Newport's Second Beach on a late September day. The tourists having slipped away and the light now slanted and lambent, the dunes belong to devotees with their beach chairs and wind screens arranged just so among the rosa ragusa. Nearby clam shacks serve the chowder which is fixed with dill weed and ground black pepper. An adjoining bird sanctuary provides refuge for Green Herons and Great Egrets and the strollers who seek them out. The same sanctuary has a raised rocky outcrop which allows sight not just of the wide crescent beach with its 'fish-skin-wet and soft-cement texture' but also in the distance Sachuest Point where off-season storms sweep in from the Atlantic and cause acrobatic havoc. A reminder that this outplanting is not always so idyllic.

The 20th century saw several hurricanes pummel the state. The memory of these storms lies coiled in the popular cortex, playing out the role of Rack & Ruin. The '38 job caught nearly everyone unawares. One survivor, an artist, recounted the odd, disordered circumstances at the storm's onset:

"The sky changed to a rich greenish yellow. The green appeared murky, and the yellow transparent. All seemed glazed over with a very light and delicate golden red. Though it was still calm, we could hear a weird hollow noise coming from some indefinable distant place. Deep and steady and musical, but also eerie and impossible to locate, the sound was frightening. Haunting and disorienting, it seemed to be everywhere and nowhere in particular. For all I knew, the sound could have been coming from the earth or myself or the sky. As time went on, the sound grew louder, more hollow, carrying greater reverberations."

That was followed by a massive wall of water. Houses were reduced to kindling or else sent scudding out to sea, their owners clinging to the roofs. Afterwards, the scrap heaps and lumber yards boomed with business. The Dunes Club was ruined. Downtown Providence reeled, with street lights shattering and the plate glass storefronts exploding. There was a lot of looting, but also many selfless acts. A senior lifeguard swam across a fast flowing breachway five times to rescue those stranded. He wound up in the hospital bruised and exhausted. He also wound up with the Carnegie Medal for Heroism.

The same steadfastness came forth on other occasions. There was a Rhode Island artillery presence at the battle of Gettysburg. By the second day's engagement their batteries were in the thick of things, filling a gap on the Union line the Confederates tried to exploit. 'By their exposed position the battery received the concentrated fire of the enemy, which was advancing so rapidly that our fuses were cut at three, two, and one second, and then canister at point blank range, and, finally, double charges were used.' One of these cannons was retrieved from the field and shipped to Providence where it still stands on the grounds of the State House. Mute but unrepentant. When

the nuclear submarine USS *Rhode Island* was christened the state's poet laureate supplied these words: 'Majestic, sullied, sultry in invention, we should never forget it has teeth...'

* * *

I'd drive through downtown Providence weekends in the early-1970s and barely see a soul on the street. The commercial district was derelict. That began to change a decade later. Several architects—all related to the School of Design and all brimming with talent—got together and made a reverse run. Several rivers which had been paved over ages ago were exhumed and made attractive. The adjoining infrastructure included walkways and parks, but also smaller scale features like tree grates and railings, bollards and lampposts. Thought went into this arrangement, so it all played off the nearby buildings rather than supply an affront to them. A financial sleight of hand allowed for federal funding. The renewed waterfront was then made the scene for WaterFire. That was a reverie lit up in the evening by braziers placed along the river and inspired by classical and operatic music played over amplifiers.

It was like a dose of high-flow oxygen. 'The riverfront and Waterplace Park could have been just another crumbly, slapdash hodgepodge of individual projects, shoddy building materials, kickback scandals, and conventional design.' But input from those architects changed the arc of the city's fortunes away from petty, provincial concerns. The inspiration for WaterFire came from someone who had spent much of his youth in Nevada's western desert where water's crucial role was borne in to him. Then, going from one side of the continent to the other, he attended Brown University where he was puzzled by the city's locals being so deprecating about their neighborhoods. It was as if, amid their staid circumstances and stalled prospects, they were Yesterday's Men and Women. WaterFire changed all that, made Providence so fashionable it became a model for an installation on Rome's Tiber River.

There was an erotic allure to all of this which one writer remarked on:

"Many have noticed that WaterFire turns the Providence waterfront into an Italian piazza, where people sit and walk and watch others sitting, walking, talking, and watching. Romance suffuses the evening along with the aromatic smoke. After most of the crowds have gone home, after the crush on the river walks subsides at midnight, there still remains a devoted throng of quiet lovers enthralled by each other and the fires—lost in each other's eyes or gazing together over the city skyline."

It is easy to dwell on the Brown/RISD nexus with the many cosmopolitan aspects to it and so miss other valued assets. The rest of the city and state offer superior instruction in oceanography and hospitality/cuisine arts. The latter in particular attracts thousands of international students. And the Naval War College, set in Newport and so at the head of the strategically positioned Narragansett Bay, excels at wargaming. Calculation and risk assessment are prime, with events ranging in complexity and

format. The War College also maintains the China Maritime Studies Institute which dispatches faculty members to the South China Sea to confer on-site with China's Coast Guard and fishing fleets. All these resources in a state which is, geographically, the tiniest in the union.

* * *

Newport always had more in common with the outer islands of Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard than with the hinterland of New England. The three shared a microclimate which was milder than the New England mainland. They received the Gulf Stream flow rather than the brisker Labrador Current. They shared dramatic coastlines, Newport having the highest cliffs between Cape Ann and the Yucatán. They also shared a sensibility, for they all early on welcomed Quakers who were pushed out of the dominant Massachusetts Bay Colony on account of non-conformity. The Quakers were shrewd in any business dealings, with their own network acting as a conduit for the conditions in distant markets. Newport's prosperity came out of shipbuilding and distilling and the accompanying trade in rum, fish, furniture and silver. Their shipping routes were aligned to Charleston and Savannah, Cuba and the rest of the Caribbean. So for generations the city was outward looking and at ease with diversity and accomplished at complex dealings.

Here is an account from *Forum Magazine* of Nantucket which applies to Newport too:

"They were characteristically not a gloomy set, those Nantucketers. Possibly the strong Quaker leaven in the early population accounts for their sustained cheerfulness and love of fun. Also I suspect that the sour, self-tortured New Englander has been intolerably magnified. At any rate, these islanders were gay, fond of a joke, droll of speech, quick of apprehension."

The same lively spirit applies today to Rhode Islanders. They mock the Mob, the shoddy roads, the dopey fixation on possessing a license plate with an extra low number, their own peculiar accent which sometimes comes out as dry as a crow's caw and at other times sounds yeasty and involuted. Roseate, they welcome the oddities and diversions which come their way. In particular, the Indian summers. That is the time well into Autumn when by special dispensation the weather reverts to 'halcyon days when the sun is delightfully warm and the air is filled with amethystine haze.' That draws Rhode Islanders outdoors, to the salt marshes and estuaries of Narragansett Bay for the chance to go clamming and crabbing. Or else to the rockpools off Newport's Ocean Drive with the Atlantic writhing nearby. You'd see Navy brats dodging the sea-spray along the jetties while nuns, more sedate but no less imbued, scan the ocean's horizon from their perch on park benches.

So, where are we? A state which is insular but one which can produce worldly resources on an array of matters. A people who are easy going except on being pressed when they call up an insistent resolve. A seacoast which is balmy and beneficial yet can go berserk on occasion. With Rhode Island, little is what it seems, for this is the slipperiest of states and all the dearer for it.

Lock-down Reading and Big Words

DAVID PALFREYMAN

AMONG my lock-down reading has been a re-read after some 30-35 years of the quintet by J.I.M. Stewart, *'A Stair-case in Surrey'* – published in the 1970s. Surrey is a quad in a thinly disguised Christ Church where Stewart (aka Michael Innes when writing crime novels) was a Student (Fellow, in House-speak), subject English. The Surrey collection is a sort of belated Oxford answer to C.P. Snow's novels about Cambridge colleges and its dondom.

There is much of what back then would have been topical within Oxford – for instance, the GB of the Surrey Quad college wrestles with the problem of a cracked Tower (as, I think, Magdalen was around this time?) and whether to flog off (so as to pay for stabilising the Tower) a newly-discovered valuable religious painting rescued from a College junk-hole under said Tower (perhaps in 1970s Oxford that was an issue at College X?) – except 'a mad fellow' (Theology) makes off with it and it ends up in a Bethnal Green mission church.

And there is quite a bit about revolting undergraduates demanding what is referred to as 'a glorified canteen' – or what at the time those of us occupying the Exam Schools saw as a 'Central Students Union' as we chanted: 'What do we want? A CSU! When do we want it? Now!'. Well, half a century on it has still not arrived – but, as far as I can tell, nobody now wants it anyway. There is also a very ancient Old English don called J.B. Timbermill who has produced a best-seller, *'The Magic Quest'*.

But I'd forgotten that it is handy to have the OED alongside when encountering unfamiliar words in the Stewart vast lexicon. So, here is a list of the words that stumped me – more erudite Readers will be less stumped/

stupid, but I offer a bottle of Plymouth Navy Strength (57%) gin (as an essential prop for another six months of lock-down) to the first Reader who declares to me that he/she knew without the aid of a dictionary more than 90% of the words in the rather long list below (note how trusting I am of the word of the Oxford don as a scholar and a gentle-bod). Warning – there are a few Scots dialect words in the list...

mimetic	whins	lustratory
chetif	limner	dreich
festal	taradiddles	divagation
praeposital	insipissated	contumelious
quiddity	lupanar	meiosis
peccant	protasis	prodromal
exoticised	scunner	confabulation
perruquier	skailing	motility
scoleye	tenebrous	cynosures
fash	atrabilious	epigones
gremial	armigerous	ebullitions
maieutic	aleatory	thaumaturge
eirenic	nescience	computation
perpend	palinode	eremitic
schizogenous	vallum	induration
gymnasiach	exegetical	cognomen
odalisque		

In fact, that list is from just volumes 1-4 of the 5, and is quite enough to test the scholarly competence of modern dondom. The gin awaits a claimant.



Reminders



"For the future, so far as we can foresee it, it appears to be unquestionable that the activity of the human race will provide the major factor in the environment of almost every evolving organism. Whether they act consciously or unconsciously human initiative and human choice have become the major channels of creative activity on this planet. Inadequately prepared we unquestionably are for the new responsibilities, which with the rapid extension of human control over the productive resources of the world have been, as it were, suddenly thrust upon us. Yet there have in recent times been some signs of a responsible attitude. We have come to expect kindness in the treatment of the domestic animals. We have come to deplore the irreplaceable loss of the species which ignorance and greed

have exterminated. The future of some wild animals has occasioned sufficient anxiety for the provision of Parks and Nature Reserves to be the normal policy of civilised peoples. These are signs that we do not feel that ruthless exploitation is good enough. Our knowledge it is true is still in the highest degree inadequate; yet a beginning has been made with ecological studies, and what has been called population genetics, at least to explore the methods by which more effective knowledge can be obtained".

From R.A. Fisher, Creative Aspects of Natural Law. Eddington Memorial Lecture, 2 November 1950. Cambridge University Press, 1950.

REVIEWS

Celsius 232.78

Richard Ovenden, *Burning the Books: A History of Knowledge Under Attack* (John Murray, 2020).



Celsius 232.78 is the temperature at which paper burns—in certain conditions. There's a novel about it by Ray Bradbury (1953) and a François Truffaut film (1966). Richard Ovenden's punchy alliterative title does not tell the whole story, since what he is mainly talking about are records, which includes books, yes, but also clay tablets, wax tablets, those bits of wood from Vindolanda on Hadrian's Wall, manuscripts on papyrus, vellum and paper, maps, videos, wax cylinders, samplers, films, tapes, 78s, 45s, LPs, CDs, DVDs, VCR cassettes (remember them?—they have to be dropped in revivals of Stoppard's *The Real Thing* (1982)), memory sticks, drawings, paintings, slides, photographs, souvenir tea-towels and, ultimately, the vast dreck on the internet and the computer drives.

I'm told that the John Johnson collection of Printed Ephemera in the Bodleian (which Ovenden does not mention) has a bag from the Banbury cake shop. When one moves house one suddenly becomes aware how heavy the records all are, how much space they take up, especially when one does not have it. Each time we move my partner says it's time to ditch the pack of semaphore cards I have from the scouts, but I tell her they might come in useful, especially if one wants to check up on the authenticity of the Monty Python semaphore version of *Wuthering Heights*—or if communications break down.



Semaphore cards from the Richards archive

Over the centuries not all the records have been burnt. Some have been shredded. Others, especially after the Dissolution of the Monasteries, were recycled as 'paste-downs' in book bindings. Some have been simply lost—such as the original version of T.E. Lawrence's *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, last seen (supposedly) on a train in Reading and Hemingway's

manuscripts, which his wife Hadley lost on a train from Paris. And there is a haunting story, which Ovenden does not mention, of John Stuart Mill's maid destroying the manuscript of Carlyle's *The French Revolution* because she thought it was waste paper. The poor chap had to sit down and write it again.

Love and respect for books is a centuries old topos. The poet D.J. Enright achieved a puzzled family fame at an early age by rescuing a broken-backed Bible from the dustbin. Incidentally, when I met him he was the last person in my experience to use the phrase 'your lady wife'.

Ovenden is in a good position to talk about books, since he is Bodley's Librarian, and his expertise is present on every page. His list of acknowledgements names 94 friends and colleagues, so there has been a highly professional input. *Burning Books* adds up to a passionate plea on behalf of the preservation of records and libraries; they are the life-blood of civilisations, and have so often been under threat, going back to the destruction in 612 BC of the Library of Ashurbanipal.

A number of cases high-light and bring the problem to prominence, such as the destruction of the library of Alexandria and the book-burning fests in Hitler's Germany. An early case of book destruction in Ephesus is recorded in *The Acts of the Apostles*:

'Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men; and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. (19.19)'

At the time of the Reformation in England a great destruction of books took place. The antiquarian John Bale, writing in 1587, regretted the fate of the monastic libraries:

'A great number of them which purchased those superstitious mansions reserved of those library books some to serve their jakes, some to scour their candlesticks, and some to rub their boots. Some they sold to the grocers and soap sellers, and some they sent over sea to the book binders, not in small number, but at times whole ships full, to the wondering of foreign nations. Yea the Universities of this realm are not all clear in this detestable fact. But cursed is that belly which seeketh to be fed with such ungodly gains, and so deeply shameth his natural country.'

As a result, said Antony Wood, 'books were dog cheap.'

There are countless examples of destruction many not widely known, such as the destruction of the library of Louvain twice: in both world wars in the twentieth cen-

tury. In some cases mindless mob violence has been responsible, such as the burning in the Gordon Riots of Lord Mansfield's house in 1780 by 'a lawless herd'. William Cowper regretted the destruction:

When Wit and Genius meet their doom
In all-devouring Flame,
They tell us of the Fate of Rome
And bid us fear the same.

Rioters in Birmingham protestors destroyed Joseph Priestley's house in 1791. In *The Enemies of Books* (1880) the Caxton scholar William James Blades (1824-1890) reports the bombardment of the Strasbourg library by the Prussians in 1870:

'Then disappeared for ever, together with other unique documents, the original records of the famous law-suits between Gutenberg, one of the first Printers, and his partners, upon the right understanding of which depends the claim of Gutenberg to the invention of the Art. The flames raged between high brick walls, roaring louder than a blast furnace. Seldom, indeed, have Mars and Pluto had so dainty a sacrifice offered at their shrines; for over all the din of battle, and the reverberation of monster artillery, the burning leaves of the first printed Bible and many another priceless volume were wafted into the sky, the ashes floating for miles on the heated air, and carrying to the astonished countryman the first news of the devastation of his Capital.'

Blades's survey is a most grisly account of the perils suffered by books. Modern readers will be offended by his gynophobia ('Why need the women-folk (God forgive me !) bother themselves about the inside of a man's library, and whether it wants dusting or not?'), although it seems to be the case that bibliophilia and its cousin bibliomania are somewhat male preserves. If it's records rather than strictly books one is talking about then Savonarola's Bonfire of the Vanities in Florence in 1497 is in the picture, as is the *auto da fé* of Beatles records in 1966, in which the Klu Klux Klan participated.

The devastation is not safely consigned to the distant past. In our time the Serbs destroyed the National and University Library of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo (August 1992) and the National Library of Baghdad was also destroyed (April 2003). Ovenden does not mention the dreadful onslaught on the cultural patrimony in Timbuktu by al-Quaida in 2013, which shows that we do not live in universally enlightened times. The oldest text was produced in 1204.

He has a chapter on colonial records, and I must confess I have never given it any thought. As Empires are dismantled

records are either destroyed or shipped back to the previous centres of Imperialism. Sometimes to conceal administrative crimes. The case of the Mau Mau records is cited. There is much concentration at the moment on Black History, but how is it to be written if the evidence has disappeared?

In addition to being destroyed books are often pillaged. The Earl of Essex brought back spoils of war from his raids on Cadiz and Faro in 1596 (this was a jolly which Donne as a Mick Jagger look-alike went on), including books now in the Bodleian. Let's hope they don't ask for them back.

The day my review copy arrived there was news about the faulty Covid-19 records and the fact that 16,000 were unaccounted for. There's nothing new under the sun: Samuel Pepys was concerned about statistics for the Great Plague, and notes: 'The mortality bill is come to 267 which is about 90 more than the last: and of these but 4 in the city—which is a great blessing to us.' (29 June 1665). As historians and journalists report on the relentless nightmare which is history the main focus is on loss of life, but the other casualties should never be over-looked, such as the destruction of libraries and other cultural riches. In the Sarajevo onslaught people were prepared to risk their lives to rescue the records under attack: they regarded them as the repositories of identity for the besieged. One recalls that a conservator Khaled al-Asaad paid with his life in 2015 trying to protect Palmyra from Isis.

* * *

This is the big picture, and Ovenden paints it very well. We need records if we are to pursue a satisfactory life. Future generations will need to know where the nuclear waste has been dumped. He mentions the wine archive of Beaune in Burgundy, stretching back to 1334—a useful tool for studying climate change. Even as I write archives are under threat in Guatemala, Turkey, Yemen and Hong Kong, and with it basic freedoms.

But there are smaller pictures too. Not necessarily as important, but part of the cultural discourse. At a macrocosmic level the French leaving Algeria wanted to conceal their atrocities by destroying or hiding documents; at a more local level individual and families have similarly obliterated embarrassing history. Richard Burton's widow Isabel, for instance, wiped the slate clean in 1891 when she destroyed his translation of *The Scented Garden*. Ovenden devotes time to the disgraceful and cowardly destruction of Byron's diaries in the offices of John Murray on 17 May 1824.

Culture wars are not just a feature of our time. The classic Oxford story, which Ovenden does not mention, took place in Exeter College. James Anthony Froude's *Nemesis of Faith* was thought to be beyond the pale so it had to be destroyed. The Rev. Arthur Blomfield gives an account:

'I had just bought the Nemesis of Faith, or as it was called, 'Faith with a Vengeance', when on Tuesday morning, February 27, 1849, I, an undergraduate of Exeter College, attended a lecture in hall. The Rev. William Sewell, Sub-Rector of Exeter College was lecturer. He declaimed loudly against Froude's Nemesis of Faith. Hearing, on my own confession, that I possessed it, he requested me to bring 'that book' to him. No sooner had I complied with his request (Sewell was my college tutor) than he snatched the book from my hands and thrust it into the blazing fire of the college hall. I see him now, with hall poker in hand, in delightful indignation, poking at this, to him, obnoxious book.'

Incidentally Froude was at the centre of a controversy in 1882-84 when it was thought that his biography of Carlyle was too revealing. The classic case of book-burning dramatically represented is when Hedda Gabler burns Eilert Løveborg's manuscript, chanting 'I'm burning your child'.

The late nineteenth century was almost permanently illuminated by the sight of bonfires as people such as Hardy got rid of the evidence. Ruskin's prissy and uptight stuffed-shirt New England executor Charles Eliot Norton and the stout embodiment of Philistia Joan Severn burnt Ruskin's rosewood box and the correspondence with Rose la Touche in the woodland garden above Brantwood, noting even as they performed the task that they were 'perhaps the most beautiful things that he ever wrote.'

Even as they put pen to paper many writers requested immediate immolation of their epistles. Doubtless many letters of Henry James have not survived, but there came a point when James was so famous that his letters were kept, despite the kind of injunction to Lucy Clifford: 'Only repeat me, quote me, betray me not and burn my letter with fire or candle (if you have either! Otherwise wade out into the sea with it and soak the ink out of it).' (17 February 1907) The recipients were not always compliant—as in this particular case! Taking a leaf out of Varius's denial of Virgil's request that *The Aeneid* should be burnt, they preserved the documents. The classic case in the twentieth century is Max Brod disobeying Kafka's request that his manuscripts should be destroyed.

Ovenden devotes a fair amount of time to the Larkin diaries, which Betty MacKereth destroyed, as he wished. And also Ted Hughes's curatorship of the Plath inheritance, to protect both himself and his deceased wife. What should they have done? In my view they should have given the diaries to the Bodleian, with the condition that they should be kept under lock and key for fifty years, say. If Larkin really wanted his diaries destroyed he should have done it himself; he had a big enough garden—room for a bonfire. There are ethical problems here. There are aesthetic ones too—to do with the dubious critical practices of reading an author's imaginative

works too much in the light of the biography.

This has exercised minds for a long time. The nineteenth century placed higher value on privacy than we do, and when Fanny Brawne's son Herbert Lindon sold Keats's letters to her, which were published, Sir Charles Dilke, the grandson of Keats's friend Charles Wentworth Dilke, tried to prevent publication. In a sense he was right: the public has no right to exercise prurient interest in a love-affair, especially when the poetry speaks for itself. I hope everyone feels a degree of guilt when reading Keats's letters.

Ovenden does not quote it, but the Oscar Wilde poem about the auction of the letters in March 1885 puts the case:

These are the letters which Endymion wrote
To one he loved in secret, and apart.
And now the brawlers of the auction mart
Bargain and bid for each poor blotted note,
Ay! for each separate pulse of passion quote
The merchant's price. I think they love not art
Who break the crystal of a poet's heart
That small and sickly eyes may glare and
gloat.

It caught him on a raw nerve, and there is always something depressing about auctions—they show the human face in a very unpleasant light. Ten years later Wilde's private life was to be exposed in a humiliating fashion.

The Keats letters fetched £543. 17s at that sale. A single Keats letter to Fanny from the late Roy Davids's collection went for £96,000 at Bonham's in March 2011, and a manuscript of 'I stood tiptoe on a little hill' from the same collection went for £181,250 in April 2013.

The classic fictional treatment of manuscript acquisitiveness is Henry James's *The Aspern Papers* (1888). This shows a researcher trying to secure the papers of an early nineteenth-century American poet, whose mistress possesses them. When she finds him raiding her desk in a Venetian palazzo she calls him a 'publishing scoundrel.' James got the idea for the novelette from the story of Edward Silsbee, who tried to get hold of Byron and Shelley papers in Florence where they were held by Byron's mistress Claire Clairmont—by now a very old lady. John Singer Sargent's portrait of Silsbee is in the Bodleian.

Ovenden is right to concentrate on the wilful and malevolent destruction of records, but many depredations are accidental. He misses a trick. On p. 69 he mentions the bibliophile Sir Robert Cotton (1570-1631). One of the treasures of his collection was the manuscript of *Beowulf*. In 1700, the library was willed to the British nation and eventually moved to Ashburnham House, Westminster. Alas, on 23 October 1731 there was a fire, and the manuscript was singed round the edges. Wearing his undergraduate mortar-board Philip Larkin would have wished the fire had been more all-consuming, although

wearing his librarian's hat he might have been relieved that it had been miraculously preserved.

* * *

A plea then for books. There's more to them than Wordsworth's 'barren leaves'. This thought must have struck many listening the other day to President Trump, during his covid infection: 'I learned a lot about covid. I learned it by really going to school. This is the real school, this isn't the "let's read the books" school. And I get it and I understand it.' This is not surprising, since one had never really thought of Donald Trump as a great reader.

Ovenden is concerned about records generally, and considers the explosion of digital communication. A recent event which has focussed minds is the destruction of the Windrush archive, which has led to a good deal of pain and injustice. Although one asks whether all the inane rubbish on Twitter has to be preserved. Will Self in *'Self-regard'* writes: 'I averred around the time of its [Twitter's] inception that the only circumstance under which I'd "tweet" would be if a live songbird flew into my mouth. It's a commitment I've stuck to, while observing that some of my peers have not been so tight-lipped.' (*TLS*, 2 October 2020) Conserving information is expensive, and has to be funded somehow, perhaps by taxing companies such as Cambridge Analytica—which influenced the Brexit Referendum. My Corpus Christi colleague, the late Trevor Aston, said that

archives can be 'fortifications for the defence of one's rights.'

One down-side of *Burning Books* is that the quality of the illustrations is sometimes very poor. Extraordinarily sumptuous images are frequently referred to, such as the picture of Venice (1338) in *The Romance of Alexander*, a book which William Morris went to look at in the Bodleian.



Venice. In *The Romance of Alexander* (Bodleian 264)

BERNARD RICHARDS

Degrees for Women

Sir – On 6 October the University launched 'a campaign in recognition of the 100th anniversary of the formal admission of women students'. This seems a little belated, for it was the Decree of June 8, 1920 which permitted a woman who had passed the Final Examination to matriculate, and thus become a member of the University and qualified to take a degree.

In 1998 when Cambridge celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of its granting of degrees to women I happened to be on the Council and permitted to wander among the social gathering of still quite numerous early graduates held on the lawn in Senate House Yard. Quite a memorable crowd they seemed. Oxford's first few will not be alive to join in Oxford's centenary celebration but the *Oxford Magazine* provides some glimpses of how this News struck its contemporary readership. *Letters to the Editor* at the time had quite other concerns.

TO THE EDITOR

On 22 October 1920 the *Magazine* reported under News that when the first women had been admitted to degrees on 14 October, 'The Sheldonian was full and there was some applause' but nothing out of the ordinary. It was done 'with all proper dignity and without friction of any kind'. The men were admitted first and then the women, but the *Magazine* hoped that in future, 'when things become normal, the two ceremonies of last week may be blended into one'. It would save time, for 'charming' though the degree ceremony is, 'it does become a little tedious if it lasts too long'. MAs were conferred on the women Heads

of House of the women's colleges and the Principal of the Home Students (now St. Anne's). The Vice-Chancellor and the Proctors were congratulated on their 'sartorial taste' in the design of women's sub-fusc though 'female ingenuity' had introduced much 'variety'.

The issue of October 29 recorded the degree ceremony of the following week at which MAs had been 'conferred on the members of the various teaching staff'. 'It would have been absurd to have students prepared for our degrees by teachers who were themselves debarred from them', said the *Magazine*. And indeed 'some had already taken part in the general work of the University' and were 'well known' to the men students.

Yours sincerely
G. R. EVANS
Oxford

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